DOCUMENT RESUME

ED 307 996 PS 018 056

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TITLE Research Study of the Pre-First Program, Springfield Local Schools (Holland, Ohio).
PUB DATE Jan 89
NOTE 10p.; Paper presented at the Association for Childhood International Study Conference (Indianapolis, IN, April 6-9, 1989).
PUB TYPE Reports - Research/Technical (143) -- Speeches/Conference Papers (150)

EDRS PRICE MF01/PC01 Plus Postage.
DESCRIPTORS Comparative Analysis; *Elementary School Students; *Grade Repetition; Longitudinal Studies; Primary Education; *Program Effectiveness; Program Evaluation; *Student Improvement; *Student Participation
IDENTIFIERS *Nonparticipation; *Pre First Program

ABSTRACT

The Pre-First classes in Springfield Local Schools, Holland, Ohio, are designed to serve developmental needs of primary school children. The district-wide program serves children of normal intelligence who are developmentally young. A screening and placement process is used. Children are placed in the classes only by parental consent to the school's recommendation. This longitudinal research study followed children who: (1) attended the pre-first program; (2) were recommended for the program and did not attend; and (3) were recommended for the program, did not attend, and were later retained. A total of 589 students were followed from the 1980-81 school year through the 1987-88 school year. Teachers responded to questions concerning proper placement, self-concept, work habits, attitude toward school, reading and math progress, and special services. Results showed that in reading and math the pre-first year group had higher ratings than the nonattendance group. Teacher judgement of proper placement showed a much higher percentage of children in the nonattendance group rated not properly placed. The pre-first year group had higher positive self-concept, and more positive attitudes toward school and satisfactory work habits in several grade levels. (Author/RH)

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RESEARCH STUDY OF THE PRE-FIRST PROGRAM

SPRINGFIELD LOCAL SCHOOLS

HOLLAND, OHIO

January, 1989

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ABSRTACT
for
Research Study of the Pre-First Program
Springfield Local Schools
Holland, Ohio

The Pre-First classes in Springfield Local Schools, Holland, Ohio, are designed to serve the varying developmental needs of primary children. This district-wide program serves children of normal intelligence who are developmentally young. Children are placed in the classes following a screening and placement process only by parental consent to the school's recommendation. This longitudinal research study follows children who (1) attended the pre-first program, (2) were recommended for the program and did not attend, and (3) were recommended for the program, did not attend, and were later retained in a grade. The study follows 589 students from 1980-81 school year through 1987-88 school year. Teachers responded to questions concerning proper placement, self concept, work habits, attitude toward school, reading and math progress, and special services. Results show that, in reading and math, the pre-first year group had higher ratings than the non-attendance group. Teacher judgement of proper placement shows a much higher percentage of children in the non-attendance group to be rated not properly placed in their grafe level. Chapter Reading services more students from the non-attendance group. The pre-first year group has higher positive self concept, positive attitude toward school, and satisfactory work habits ratings in several grade levels in the study. An important finding is that the retained students throughout the study have poorer ratings in all areas than the pre-first year group, even though both groups have had an extra year in the primary grades.

PURPOSE

In 1979, the Pre-First Program began with the creation of one class at Holland Elementary. Each successive year, one additional class was developed, until the present four district-wide pre-first classes were established. This research study was sparked by a question - "Is the program effective?" I set out to follow the progress of all the children who have been in the program through the elementary years. Also, I wanted to follow the progress of those children who were recommended for the program, but did not attend because their parents declined the recommendation. This study includes students from the 1980 through 1987 school years.

STUDY DESIGN

Three groups are the major part of the study. (1)The "Pre-First YES" group are students who were recommended for the program and attended pre-first. (2)Next are students who were recommended for the program and did not attend pre-first. The majority of the non-attendance group are those whose parents declined the school's recommendation for placement in the program. This group will be called the "Pre-first NO" group. There are a few students in this group who did not attend because they were on a waiting list for the program. There are six children in this study who attended pre-first, but skipped first grade upon the wishes of the parents and went directly to second grade against the school's recommendation. (3)The last group are children who began in the "Pre-first NO" group, then were retained in a grade. Beginning with their retention year, they are the "Retained" group. The sixth grade year for this group has only two students, so it will not be reported here.

Homeroom teachers were asked to respond to the following survey:

Do you feel this student....
- is properly placed in this grade level?
- has a positive or negative self concept?
- has satisfactory or unsatisfactory work habits?
- has a positive or negative attitude toward school?

Is the student in the high, medium, or low groups for reading and math?

Did the student receive Chapter Reading help?

Did the student have psychological testing?

POPULATION

Total students = 589

Pre-First YES Group= 371 students

251 have had a first grade year
186 have had a second grade year
129 have had a third grade year
78 have had a fourth grade year
52 have had a fifth grade year
28 have had a sixth grade year
1 has had a retention year

Pre-First NO Group= 218 students

209 have had a first grade year
145 have had a second grade year
98 have had a third grade year
55 have had a fourth grade year
33 have had a fifth grade year
20 have had a sixth grade year
34 have had a retention year

Retained Group = 35 students

after the retention year,
8 have had a second grade year
15 have had a third grade year
8 have had a fourth grade year
6 have had a fifth grade year
2 have had a sixth grade year

SUMMARY OF DATA

PLACEMENT: NOT PROPERLY PLACED

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	1%	4%	6%	4%	2%	0%
Pre-First NO	54%	35%	12%	24%	12%	20%
Retained	-	0%	7%	25%	17%	-

This is a significant factor. The children in the Pre-First YES group who were judged to be improperly placed were not considered to be underplaced, rather, the teachers felt some other placement (such as LD, DH, SBH) was more appropriate. The percentages are very low when compared to the Pre-First NO group and the Retained group.

READING: IN THE LOW GROUP

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	15%	26%	28%	26%	37%	0%
Pre-First NO	46%	37%	26%	22%	30%	30%
Retained	-	43%	29%	63%	67%	-

IN THE MEDIUM GROUP

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	49%	50%	47%	53%	39%	46%
Pre-First NO	41%	50%	55%	56%	52%	45%
Retained	-	57%	50%	25%	17%	-

IN THE HIGH GROUP

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	36%	23%	25%	22%	23%	32%
Pre-First NO	13%	12%	18%	22%	18%	20%
Retained	-	0%	14%	0%	0%	-

In first and second grade, there are significantly fewer Pre-First students in the low group. The Retained group has a large percentage in the low reading in fourth and fifth grades. Conversely, the Retained group has fewer students in the medium and high groups. The Pre-First YES group has a higher percentage in the high reading group in all grades except fourth grade.

SUMMARY OF DATA

MATH: IN THE LOW GROUP

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	8%	18%	22%	41%	27%	32%
Pre-First NO	36%	29%	20%	33%	27%	25%
Retained	-	0%	50%	50%	33%	-

IN THE MEDIUM GROUP

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	51%	54%	52%	41%	48%	46%
Pre-First NO	48%	59%	55%	46%	52%	50%
Retained	-	100%	36%	25%	50%	-

IN THE HIGH GROUP

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	41%	27%	26%	18%	19%	21%
Pre-First NO	14%	11%	22%	22%	18%	20%
Retained	-	0%	7%	12%	0%	-

In the first and second grade the Pre-First YES group had significantly fewer students in the low math group, and more students in the high math group. In third through sixth, the Pre-First YES group had slightly higher percentages in the high math groups. The Retained group has higher percentages in the low math for third, fourth, and fifth; lower percentages in the medium math in third and fifth grades; significantly lower percentages in high math groups for all grades reported.

RETENTION RATES

Pre-First YES - 371 students - 1 retention = .003%
Pre-First NO - 218 students - 34 retentions= 15%

CHAPTER READING: RECEIVING SERVICES

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	8%	23%	22%	not offered beyond third		
Pre-First NO	35%	35%	14%			
Retained	-	43%	14%			

SELF CONCEPT: POSITIVE

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	88%	79%	80%	75%	85%	86%
Pre-First NO	72%	76%	82%	76%	88%	80%
Retained	-	71%	64%	25%	59%	-

The Pre-First YES group has higher ratings in first, second, and sixth. The Retained group has significantly lower ratings in all grades reported.

WORK HABITS: SATISFACTORY

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	84%	69%	74%	69%	71%	71%
Pre-First NO	67%	66%	78%	71%	70%	60%
Retained	-	43%	71%	38%	17%	-

The results here are similar to self concept. The Pre-First YES group has higher ratings in first, second, and third. The Retained group has low ratings in all grades.

ATTITUDE TOWARD SCHOOL: POSITIVE

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	89%	77%	85%	72%	75%	79%
Pre-First NO	84%	80%	82%	76%	76%	90%
Retained	-	71%	64%	38%	33%	-

The Pre-First YES group has higher ratings in first and third grade. Again, the Retained group has much lower ratings in all grades reported.

PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING: REFERRAL RATE

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	6%	10%	7%	3%	2%	0%
Pre-First NO	5%	10%	4%	2%	0%	5%
Retained	-	14%	7%	13%	0%	-

PSYCHOLOGICAL TESTING: PLACEMENT RATE

	1st	2nd	3rd	4th	5th	6th
Pre-First YES	50%	37%	83%	0%	0%	0%
Pre-First NO	20%	20%	50%	0%	0%	0%
Retained	-	0%	0%	0%	0%	-

Referral rates for both Pre-First groups are similar, with the exception of third and sixth grades. It is interesting to note the Retained group had much higher rates in second and fourth grades than the other two groups.

Placement rates show that there were no special placements made from the three groups beyond third grade. In first through third grade, the Pre-First Yes group had higher placement rates than the Pre-First No group. This may indicate that, in the Pre-First No group, developmental overplacement is the reason for the difficulties the child is having, not a specific handicap requiring other special services. This would support the original recommendation for the Pre-First class. For the Pre-First Yes group, higher placement rates would be expected, as there has already been one intervention strategy for them.

It is also interesting to note that the Retained group, having a higher referral rate, had no special placements. This would raise questions of the effects of retention.

SUMMARY OF CONCLUSIONS

1. The Pre-First No group has a large percentage of students who were judged to be improperly placed in their grade level. The Pre-First Yes group has a low percentage. The Retained group has the highest rates in third, fourth, and fifth grades.

2. The Pre-First Yes group has higher percentages of students being rated in the high reading groups, with none being rated in the low group in sixth grade. The Retained group has the highest percentage of students in the low groups for all grades.

3. The Pre-First Yes group has higher percentages of students being rated in the high math groups in all grades except fourth. The Retained group again has the highest percentage of students in the low groups; none were rated in the high groups for second and fifth grades.

4. The retention rate for the Pre-First No group is 15%. The retention rate for the Pre-FIrst Yes group is 0.003%.

5. Chapter Reading services have a higher percentage of students coming from the Pre-First No and Retained groups for first and second grade. (It is not offered beyond third grade.)

6. The Pre-First Yes group has higher percentage of positive self concept ratings in first, second, and sixth grades. The Retained group has significantly lower percentages of positive ratings in all grades.

7. The Pre-First Yes group has higher percentage of satisfactory work habits ratings in the primary grades. The Retained group has a lower pergentage in all grades.

8. The Pre-First Yes group has a higher percentage of positive attitude toward school in the first and third grades. Again, the Retained group has much lower percentages of positive ratings in all grades.

9. Psychological testing referral rates for both Pre-First groups are similar. However, the Retained group has a much higher referral rate.

10. Special placements as a result of referral for psychological testing shows no placements from the three groups in the intermediate grades. A lower percentage of placements from the Pre-First No group supports the initial recommendation for the pre-first year.